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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
PROPOSES JOINT SEMINAR ON LAW ON PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

REF: A. ASHGABAT 1130

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1079

[1](#)C. ASHGABAT 1001

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On October 24, the Director of the Institute of Democracy and Human Rights Under the President of Turkmenistan, Shirin Ahmedova, proposed that the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) jointly organize with the Institute in January 2008 a roundtable on comparative legislation in NIS countries relating to public organizations. Additionally, the Institute's director expressed interest in receiving comparative law materials, articles, and laws from various countries relating to public organizations to assist in its work. ICNL agreed to provide the Institute with a copyright which would allow the Institute to publish certain ICNL materials, such as information on laws, articles, overviews, comparative analyses and other items including, its magazine "Democracy and Law." As evidenced by her ability to identify a specific date for the proposed conference, Ahmedova demonstrated that she is willing to move beyond mere expressions of interest in cooperation to specifying concrete areas for cooperation. It is unlikely she would have taken this step without presidential approval. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (U) A delegation of experts from the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, a USIAD implementing partner, met with Shirin Ahmedova, the Director of the Turkmen National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights Under the President of Turkmenistan, on October 24 to follow up on discussions regarding potential opportunities for cooperation (Reftel A). Natalia Bourjaily, ICNL's Vice President-NIS, and Elizabeth Warner, Program Director for Central Asia, delivered an overview of ICNL's current USAID-funded operations in Turkmenistan, which involve supporting lawyers working with civic groups interested in registering as NGOs and promoting public discussion of legal and policy issues related to civic organizations. Additionally, Bourjaily expressed a willingness to expand ICNL's current activities in partnership with the Institute.

14. (U) During the meeting, Ahmedova requested that ICNL consider organizing an international seminar on "Overview of Legislation Relating to Public Organizations in the NIS". She proposed that roundtable take place on the premises of the Institute for approximately 30 -35 participants from the Institute of Democracy and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economics and Finance, State Committee of Turkmenistan on Statistics, Ministry of Social Support, Youth Union, Women's Union, National Center of Labor Unions of Turkmenistan, Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, and other government agencies. ICNL agreed to invite experts on legislation on public organizations from Russia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, as well as international experts competent in legislation from most NIS, European and Asian countries. Participants will learn about legislation regulating the activities of public organizations in the NIS region, including such issues as the regulation of charitable activities, registration and reporting requirements of public organizations, legal mechanisms of cooperation between the state and public organizations, and provision of social services. Ahmedova proposed January 15-16 as possible dates for the two-day seminar. (NOTE: The dates are subject to change by the Institute, but ICNL stands ready to assist with conducting the event on any dates after January 14. END NOTE.)

15. (U) At the request of the Institute, ICNL will also provide comparative law materials, articles, and copies of laws from various countries on public organizations. All these materials will be available in Russian.

16. (U) ICNL also offered to provide the Institute with copyright privileges to allow the Institute to republish agreed-upon materials, including laws, articles, overviews, and comparative analyses, in its magazine, "Democracy and Law." ICNL provided some of its books to the National Institute during the meeting, which were received with great enthusiasm. Most of the offered materials

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are available in Russian as well.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: Opportunities to engage with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights continue to expand. As evidenced by her ability to identify a specific date for the proposed conference, Ahmedova demonstrated that she is willing to move beyond mere expressions of interest in cooperation to specifying concrete areas for cooperation - we doubt she would have done so without presidential approval. To capitalize on this, USAID will follow up its recent previous meeting with Ms. Ahmedova (Reftel A.) by submitting a proposal that contains a range of possible joint activities with this seemingly willing partner in the coming days. END COMMENT.

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